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Exhibition of Portraits

of

George Washington



Colony Club



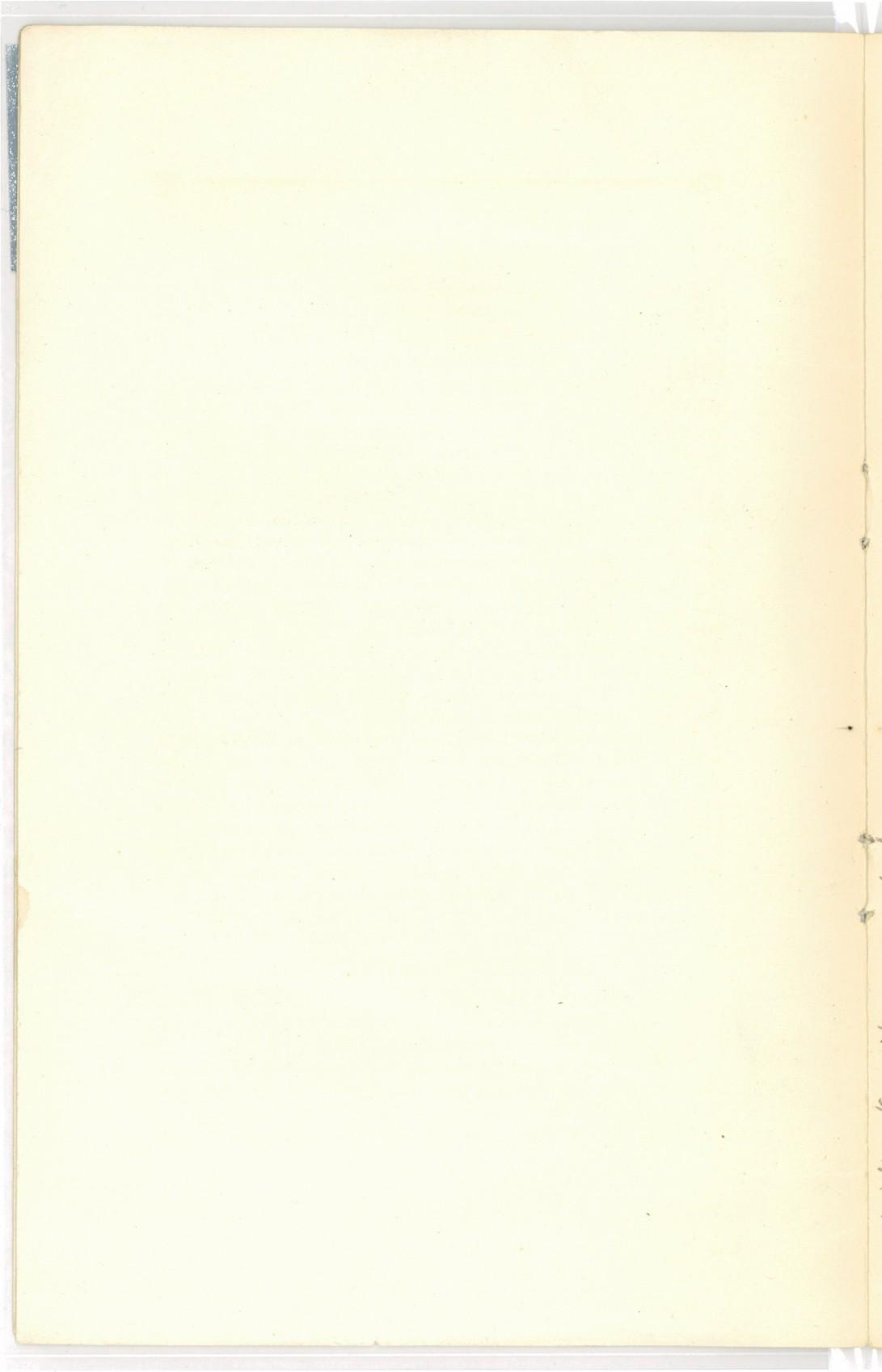
April 18th to 27th inclusive

1922

CATALOGUE ARRANGED BY
JOHN HILL MORGAN



HE position occupied by Washington at the close of the American Revolution was unique. Not only had he won independence for his countrymen from the strongest European power, but his commanding appearance and lofty character had made him a central figure in the eyes of the world. It followed that not alone native artists but those of many lands sought the opportunity of handing down his likeness to posterity. He was painted by William Birch, Dunlap, DuSimitierre, Field, Robert Fulton, Gölager, C. W. Peale, Rembrandt Peale, Rafaelle and James Peale, Pine, Ramage, Archibald and Walter Robertson, Savage, St. Mémin, Sharples, Stuart, Trumbull, Wertmüller, and Joseph Wright, and many others. Houdon, the greatest sculptor of his day, made the trip from Paris to Mt. Vernon for the sole purpose of modeling his bust. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that literally hundreds of his portraits—some from life and many mere improvisations—exist, and that in 1800, Washington, either in oil, pastel, or engraving, hung in the homes of a majority of his countrymen. Hart, in his Catalogue of The Engraved Portraits of Washington, printed for the Grolier Club, records eight hundred and eighty separate engravings of Washington, not enumerating different states of the same plate.



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1

GEORGE WASHINGTON

AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

OF THE CONTINENTAL ARMY

by Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827)

Owner, CHARLES A. MUNN

This portrait was painted between 1780 and 1783, and shows the College Campus at Princeton and Nassau Hall in the background, with British prisoners being marched across the field under guard. The blue ribbon across Washington's breast does not represent the insignia of a Marshal of France, as is ascribed to it by persisting tradition, but was a badge of office adopted by Washington himself when the Continental Army was in camp before Boston. The absence of uniforms had led to much confusion and the soldiers experienced much difficulty in recognizing the person and rank of officers. Therefore a general order, dated July 14th, 1775, was issued stating that to prevent mistakes the Commander-in-Chief would wear "A light blue ribbon wore acrost his breast between his coat and waistcoat." The flag with the thirteen stars is probably the one used in the Battle of Princeton. The inverted banners are the colors captured from the Hessians at the Battle of Princeton.

Peale made ten or twelve replicas of this portrait, differing somewhat in detail. One hangs at the Palace at Versailles, another sent in charge of Henry Laurens in 1780 by the packet Mercury as a gift to the Stadholder of Holland was captured by Captain George Keppel, H.M.S. Vestal, and became his property. It has lately been presented by Lord Albemarle, head of the Keppel family, to the British nation and hangs in the meeting room of the British Cabinet, 10 Downing Street, London.

2

GEORGE WASHINGTON

AS PRESIDENT

by Charles Willson Peale

Owner, HERBERT L. PRATT

C. W. Peale is said by his son to have painted Washington fourteen times from life and portraits of this type are replicas of the one made at the last sitting granted by Washington to Peale in 1795. If, as Stuart said, the bust by Houdon is to be the

Gift - Knobell 11/31/75

canon by which all other portraits of Washington are to be judged, then this portrait is probably a truer likeness than the Atheneum portrait which is so familiar. The original of this type has always been considered to be the one in the Bryan collection owned by The New York Historical Society, as it was purchased after Peale's death at the dispersal of his Museum.

The late Charles Henry Hart, however, considered this canvas a finer example of Peale's work and quite as likely to be the original as the Bryan portrait.

3

GEORGE WASHINGTON

char willson peale
by Charles Willson Peale

Owner, HERBERT L. PRATT

Painting L

Peale's first portrait of Washington was painted at Mt. Vernon in 1772, when Washington was about forty years old, in the uniform of a Colonel of the Virginia Militia. Next in interest come his portraits of Washington as Commander of the Continental Army. Besides the number of full lengths Peale executed many bust portraits, of which the one here shown is an example. It depicts the General as he looked in about 1780.

4

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(Port Hole Type)

Rembrandt Peale
by Rembrandt Peale (1778-1860)

Owner, JONATHAN BULKLEY

Painting L

Rembrandt Peale, a son of Charles Willson Peale, was accorded three sittings of three hours each by Washington in 1795. At the same time his father, his brother Raphaelle, and his uncle James Peale, were also engaged in painting portraits of the first President.

After two years study under West, Peale returned to this country and devoted much time painting the likeness of Washington in an attempt to realize his ideal. He writes that he made sixteen of these attempts which resulted in the original of this portrait completed in 1823, and later purchased by the Government, and it now hangs in the Senate Chamber in Washington.

Peale records that besides making thirty-nine copies of his father's portrait of Washington he made seventy-nine replicas of this, which is known as the "Port Hole Type."

5

GEORGE WASHINGTON
by Robert Edge Pine (1742-1788)

Owner, GRENVILLE KANE

Pine was the son of a celebrated English engraver, John Pine. Being in active sympathy with Republican principles he came to this country with the expressed desire of painting historical works after the manner of Benjamin West. In 1785 he was accorded sittings by Washington at Mt. Vernon, where he remained three weeks. He made at least two of these portraits, the present one having been purchased by Henry Brevoort in Montreal in 1817. Washington wrote in his diary on April 28, 1785, the following: "To dinner Mr. Pine, a pretty eminent portrait & Historical Painter arrived in order to take my picture from the life & to place it in the Historical pieces he was about to draw." The President's diary also records the date that Pine left Mt. Vernon, which was May 19, 1785.

6

GEORGE WASHINGTON
by Joseph Wright (1756-1793)

Owner, HERBERT L. PRATT

Joseph Wright, a native of Bordentown, New Jersey, was a son of Patience Wright, the celebrated modeller in wax. He painted several portraits of Washington and at least one is signed "J. Wright, 1784, Philadelphia." He made several copies differing in size and detail and Washington ordered one which he directed Wright to hand to Robert Morris for presentation to the Count de Solms. The florid letter of thanks, dated August 4, 1785, informs Washington that the Count had placed the portrait between that of "the King of Prussia and his illustrious brother Henry. You see that this is a trio very harmonical."

7 and 8

GEORGE WASHINGTON
(Profile and three-quarter view, in pastel)

by James Sharples (1751-1811)
Owner, HERBERT L. PRATT

Sharples, an Englishman, and a pupil of Romney, came to the United States in 1796. He made many pastel cabinet portraits of General and Mrs. Washington as well as of other members of the so-called Republican Court.

Washington ordered several from the artist, also portraits of Mrs. Washington and other members of his family, including George Washington Lafayette, which, in small oval gilt frames at one time hung in the music room in Mt. Vernon.

As Sharples used a pantograph for his profile views, this portrait may be accepted as exact in proportion.

Many of these pastels exist, as Sharples, his wife, and his sons James and Felix made copies, although the latter are inferior to those drawn by the elder Sharples.

9 and 10

GEORGE WASHINGTON
(Profile and three-quarter view, in oil)

1751-1811 — by James Sharples (?)

Owner, HERBERT L. PRATT

Of these portraits, the profile was brought from England and exhibited in the New York Historical Society in 1853, where it was shown as an original portrait from life painted by James Sharples on order of Robert Cary, Washington's London agent or factor. It created much favorable comment.

This portrait and the three-quarter view were again brought to the United States in 1882 and exhibited in several of the clubs in New York, including The Century, and generally throughout the country, and were the center of a bitter controversy as to their authenticity. A detailed report on the subject was made by a committee of the Massachusetts Historical Society, headed by Francis Parkman, the historian, and their provenance and the good faith of their then owner were sharply criticized.

The portraits, despite this report, have merit and are deserving of careful consideration. An excellent critic has said, "These portraits if not done by Sharpes himself are from drawings originally made by him. Comparing the work on the profile with other examples of Sharpes' work in oil, there are strong indications that the work was done by Sharpes himself."

11

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(Vaughan Type)

by Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828)

Owner, CHARLES A. MUNN

Gilbert Stuart, after studying under Cosmo Alexander and West, became a successful portrait painter in England and Ireland for ten years before he returned to this country in 1792.

As his portraits of Washington are the most important of any painted, they rightly take the first place in any exhibition.

Stuart's desire to paint Washington's portrait was accomplished through the introduction of John Jay and he had his first sitting in Philadelphia during a session of the United States Congress either late in 1794 or early in 1795.

As soon as Stuart's portrait of this type was exhibited he was overwhelmed with orders and among his papers was found a memorandum dated "Phil. Apr. 10, 1795" "A list of gentlemen who are to have copies of the portrait of the President of the U. S."; which shows that he then had received commissions for thirty-nine. Stuart wrote that he rubbed out his first portrait but as he practically kept no records his memory cannot be relied upon as at least eleven authentic copies of this type are now known. The type takes its name from the replica painted for Samuel Vaughan and engraved by Holloway in London in 1796.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(Athenaeum Type)

by Gilbert Stuart

Owner, UNIVERSITY CLUB

Handwritten Note: *Very good*

Stuart received an order from Mrs. Washington for a portrait of the President and herself, intended as a gift to her eldest granddaughter Elizabeth Parke Law. This order he executed in 1796, but he kept the original studies during the remainder of his life and used them as the base for the replicas made after that date. At his death they were bought from Stuart's widow by the Washington Association of Boston and presented to the Boston Athenaeum and they now hang in the Boston Museum. The hundreds of copies of this portrait of Washington in oil, engraving and lithograph, and its use on government bank notes and stamps have made this likeness of Washington familiar to millions of his countrymen. John Neal, in his Charcoal Sketches, said "if Washington were to rise from the grave and not be found to resemble Stuart's portrait he would be rejected as an imposter."

Rembrandt Peale, Winstanley, and Frothingham, and many lesser lights all made a comfortable living copying this portrait, and it is probable that Stuart himself made about sixty-five replicas, although the number parading under his name must be well into the hundreds.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

(Full length—Tea Pot Type)

by Gilbert Stuart

Owner, WALTER JENNINGS

Handwritten Note: *Good*

It is probable that before Stuart returned to this country he had received a commission from the Marquis of Lansdowne for a portrait of Washington of a size suitable to hang in his country seat. Once here Stuart was persuaded to permit William Bingham to purchase the portrait so that he might present it to the Marquis.

Stuart painted the portrait from life in 1796 and made two replicas, probably from life—one signed and dated "G. Stuart, 1796" is owned by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; the second was presented by Mr. Bingham to the Marquis of Lansdowne, and is now owned by Lord Roseberry; and the third is owned by Robert L. Pierrepont of Brooklyn. It was engraved by Heath in London in 1796.

The success of this portrait led to many orders by municipal and State authorities, and they can be found in the public buildings of many Eastern cities.

The portrait here on view is a variation known as the "Tea Pot Type." The general arrangement of the figure, table, books, curtains, pillars and accessories is the same, but the hand and lower part of the body differ from the Lansdowne type (see Hart, 645).

Recent expert cleaning of this portrait has removed a large amount of repainting by an inferior hand and indicates the work of Stuart.

14

GEORGE WASHINGTON

by John Trumbull (1756-1843)

Owner, CHARLES A. MUNN

Danbycon House

Trumbull, son of Brother Jonathan, the Revolutionary Governor of Connecticut, after resigning his commission in the Continental Army in pique, sailed for London in May, 1780, to study under West. After the execution of Major André, Trumbull was arrested in reprisal and spent many months in an English gaol. His portrait may have been painted during this period, as it was engraved in London, January 15, 1781, by Valentine Green, on which it is stated that the portrait was painted in 1780, and that it was owned by Mr. De Neufville, head of the well-known firm of Dutch bankers.

This engraving was the first reproduction of an authentic likeness of Washington which appeared in Europe.

15

GEORGE WASHINGTON

by Adolph Ulric Wertmüller (1750-1811)

Owner, CHARLES A. MUNN

Wertmüller, a Swede, emigrated to the United States in 1794 after attaining a position of considerable prominence in the Art world of Europe. He finally settled in Delaware, where he married a granddaughter of the Colonial painter Hesselius.

Wertmüller painted several portraits of the President, and although no record can be found in Washington's diary of sittings being accorded to this artist it is probable that at least his original portrait was from life.

One of Wertmüller's portraits hangs in the office of the Department of the Interior in Washington.

